

RIBBONS OF WATER

THE WATERFALLS AND CASCADES OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK



By
John F. Barber

A. Dean and Jean M. Larsen
Yellowstone Park Collection

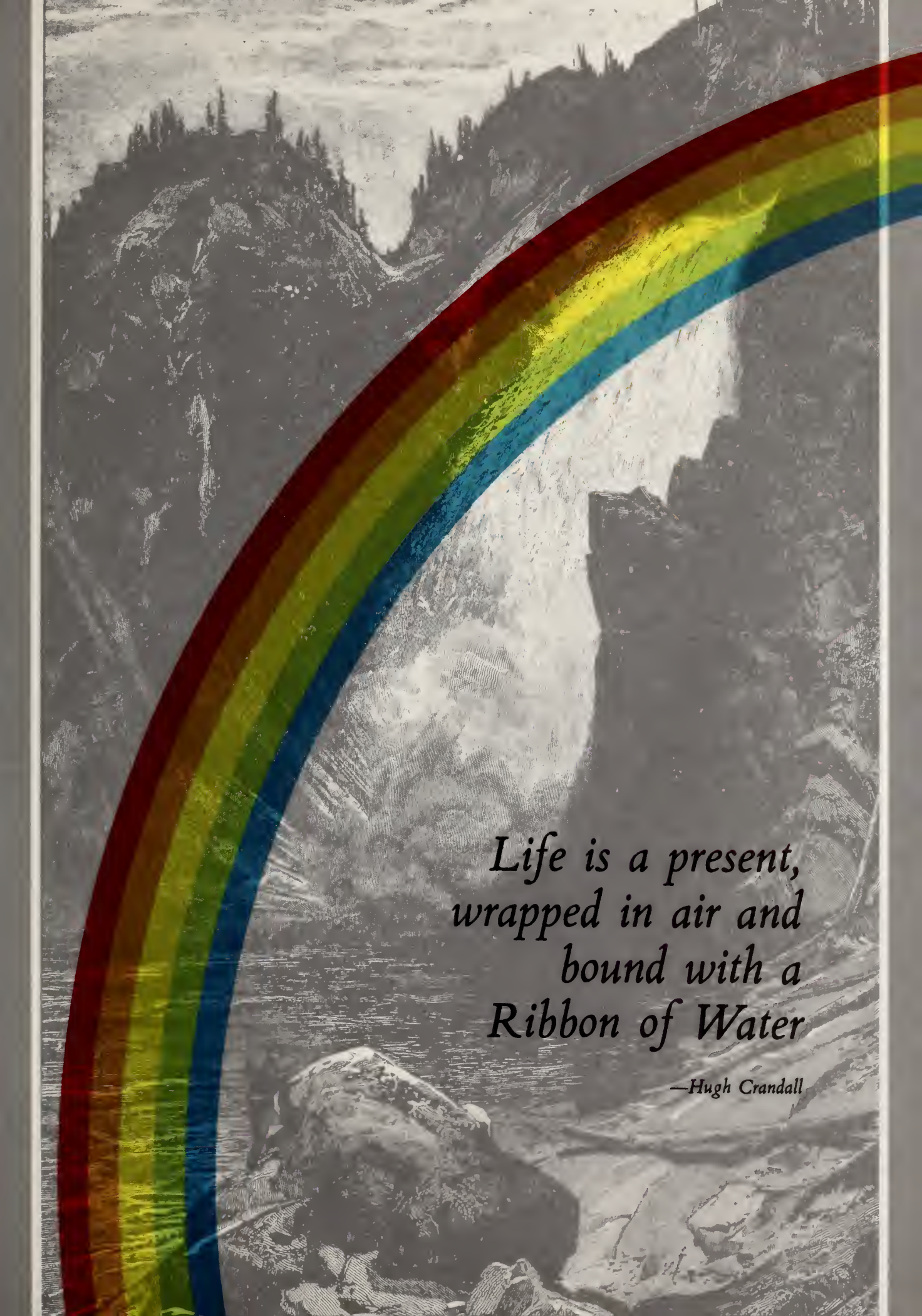


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*Life is a present,
wrapped in air and
bound with a
Ribbon of Water*

—Hugh Crandall

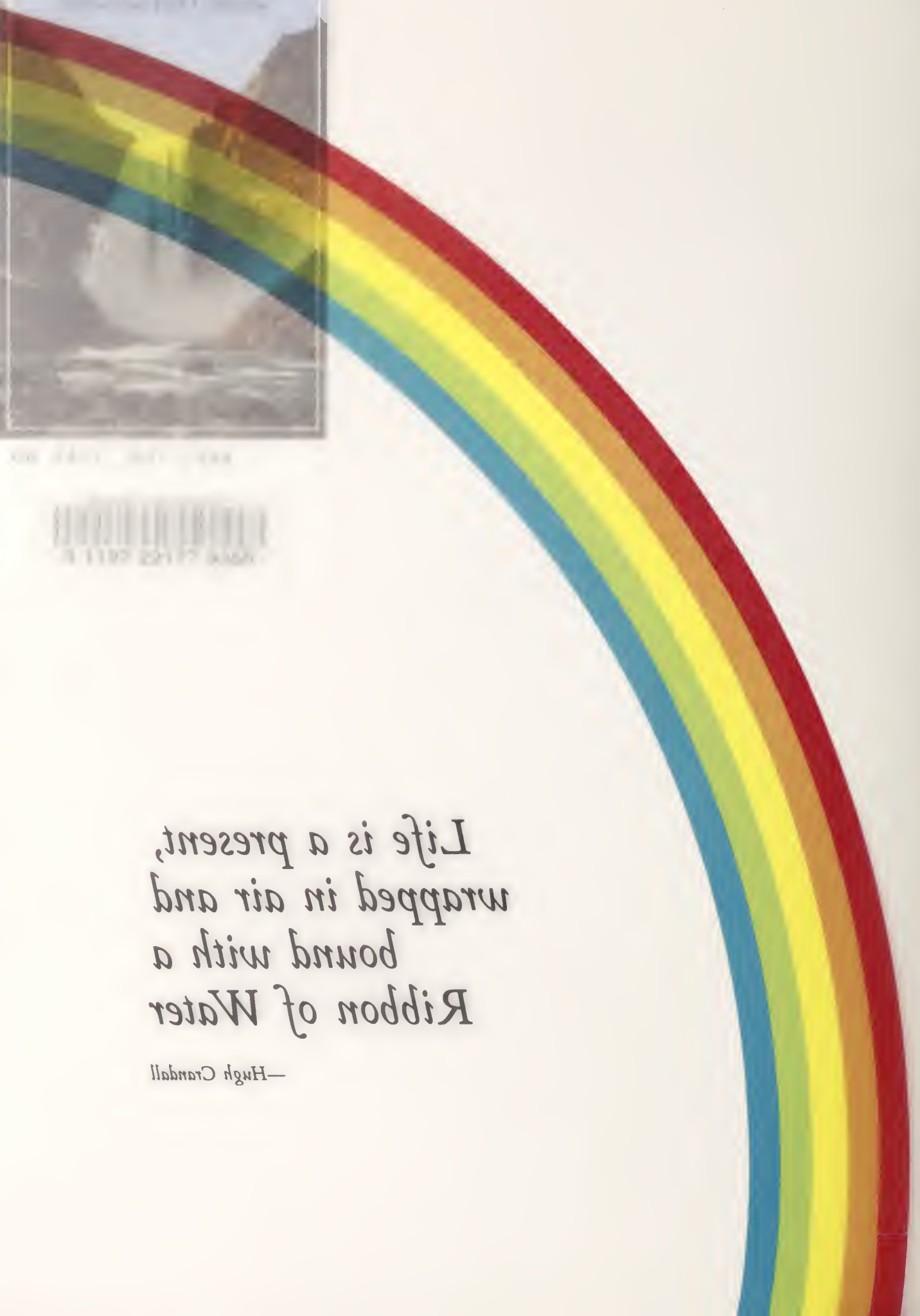


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RIBBONS OF WATER

THE WATERFALLS AND CASCADES OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

By John F. Barber

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Waterfalls and cascades are gentle symphonies of flowing water; graceful dances with gravity.

Waterfalls and cascades are fundamental features of the earth's landscape; imbued with a special magic.

Waterfalls and cascades are spirits in motion; awe inspiring and unable to be intellectualized.

Waterfalls and cascades are variations on a central theme; in all sizes, all shapes, and at all times impressive.

Waterfalls and cascades are abundant in Yellowstone National Park; the stage and the concert hall for one of the world's greatest **Ribbons of Water** performances.



RIBBONS OF WATER

Straddling the Rocky Mountains and the Continental Divide, Yellowstone National Park is part of the roof of our continent. And, like water running off a roof during a rain storm, rivers and streams flow out of Yellowstone and begin their journeys to the oceans. As these rivers and streams flow through Yellowstone, they often react with the varied and ever changing landscape to form waterfalls and cascades.

Yellowstone's varied landscape is the result of lava flows, glaciers, and erosion.

About 600,000 years ago, a huge dome of magma developed beneath the Yellowstone region. As the magma dome grew in size, tremendous pressures strained the earth's crust. Finally a huge explosion occurred.

When the explosion subsided, lava flows began. Those lava flows built a plateau several hundreds of feet in height over much of the Yellowstone region. Where those lava flows ended, steep drop-offs formed between the top of the plateau and the terrain below.

Later, during the various periods of the Ice Age, huge glaciers invaded the Yellowstone region. These slow-moving tongues of ice scraped, scoured, and sculpted the Yellowstone landscape. When the last glaciers retreated, they left behind a region of irregular topography.

Erosion continued sculpting the Yellowstone region. Where rivers and streams flowed across rock of different degrees of hardness, the softer rock was eroded faster. The faster erosion of the softer rock often created ledges or drop-offs along the water courses.

Today, rivers and streams flowing out of Yellowstone must flow over these ledges and drop-offs in order to continue their journeys down off the roof of the continent. As a result, waterfalls and cascades—**Ribbons of Water**—are formed. Yellowstone National Park is noted for its splendid collection.

In the early stages of preparing this book it quickly became apparent that many more waterfalls and cascades exist in Yellowstone National

Park than those which are recognized on the topographical maps. While walking to the waterfalls and cascades listed on the maps of Yellowstone, I often stumbled across others for which I could find no indication of their existence.

And that seemed to be the magic of the whole project: the fact that one can still visit natural features like waterfalls and cascades which remain unknown, unmapped, and unnamed.

In the final stages of preparing this book I decided to include only those waterfalls and cascades recognized on the topographical maps of Yellowstone National Park. No doubt while visiting some of the waterfalls and cascades presented in this book you will find others. The feeling of discovery will then be yours.

While photographing these waterfalls and cascades I recorded my thoughts, feelings, and impressions in a journal. I have included excerpts from that journal herein. What follows is a look in words and pictures at some of the **Ribbons of Water** for which Yellowstone National Park is so justly famous. While visiting each of these waterfalls and cascades I sensed some of their special magic. I hope you will feel their magic also.

John F. Barber
Spring 1984



ROADSIDE WATERFALLS AND CASCADES



Several of Yellowstone's spectacular waterfalls and cascades are easily viewed from alongside the Grand Loop Road as one travels through the park.

These **Ribbons of Water** form a good introduction to variations on a central theme which is played so well in Yellowstone National Park.



RIBBONS OF WATER

UNDINE FALLS

By following a road from any developed location in Yellowstone National Park, one can find, and easily view, **Ribbons of Water**. They make the wilderness experience tangible—even at a few short steps from the automobile.

Sitting here at the edge of Undine Falls, the transition between the road and the wilderness seems complete. A chipmunk ran along the stone wall at the roadside parking lot where I stopped and left my truck. Mules-ear *Wyethia* line the edges of the trail leading to this viewpoint. The bright yellow flowers are surrounded by green, shiny leaves, shaped, after a fashion, like the ears of a mule, and hence the common name.

The generic name, *Wyethia*, is in honor of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, a shrewd Massachusetts ice merchant who, in 1834, with an eye for bigger profits, crossed the continent with a wagon train carrying supplies for the annual rendezvous of mountain men and fur trappers. Wyeth was supplying the men of the Rocky Mountain fur-trade era in exchange for the furs they collected. He expected to make a profit on the supplies and watered down whiskey he sold at the rendezvous and on the furs he sold in St. Louis—good Yankee reasoning.



To promote his business, Wyeth hobnobbed with the legendary Bill and Milton Sublette, James “Broken Hand” Fitzpatrick, and Jim “Old Gabe” Bridger. It must have been, as the mountain men said, “shinin’ times.” Apparently the botanist who accompanied Wyeth on that trip agreed and sought to immortalize the enterprising Captain.



The mountain men, fur trappers, and their yearly rendezvous are gone now, but their memories are still “shinin’.” As Undine Falls plunges over the rock ledges and into the tangled canyon below, I can still sense the spirit of the wilderness freedom which must have attracted those men to this region before civilization arrived.



Undine Falls (Upper) - 60 ft.

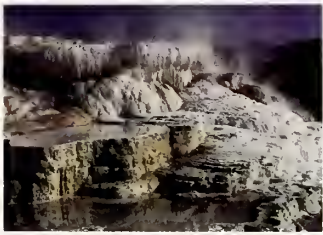
RIBBONS OF WATER

UNDINE FALLS

...top of Mt. Everts, a huge up-thrusted block of Yellowstone's topography named for Truman C. Everts, member of an exploratory party which penetrated this region in 1870.

Separated from the rest of his party, Everts wandered about the Yellowstone wilderness for 37 days before being rescued. Apparently none the worse for the experience, Everts died in 1901, at the age of 85. He was survived by a daughter, a young widow, and a son, born when Everts was 76 years old.

While wandering around up here, thinking of Truman, I surprised a mule deer. The mule deer, named for its mule-like ears, is the smallest member of the deer family found in Yellowstone National Park. During the summer months mule deer are scattered throughout the park. During the winter they migrate to the lower elevations around Mammoth Hot Springs and Gardiner, Montana.



Mammoth Hot Springs is off to the west. From here I have a "bird's-eye view" of the terraces and the travertine deposits around the various hot water outlets. Limestone underlies the entire Mammoth area. As hot water, mixed with carbon dioxide, rises through this layer it dissolves the limestone and carries it in suspension to the surface. In contact with the air, the carbon dioxide escapes and the dissolved limestone, no longer able to be held in suspension, is deposited in delicately terraced formations of travertine. Every 24 hours, 200,000 gallons of water flow from Mammoth Hot Springs and two new tons of travertine are added to the immense stair-stepped formations.

Below is Lava Creek Canyon and the lower drop of Undine Falls. It is not visible from the road, but from here this waterfall appears like a sparkling jewel tucked into a hidden corner of Yellowstone's rich wilderness.





Undine Falls (Lower) - 50 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER

RUSTIC FALLS

Freezing spray has completely encapsulated the waterfall. Only through knowing it during warmer months can I imagine Rustic Falls, now hidden beneath its winter shawl of ice.

Rustic Falls sits at the head of a cleft between Bunsen Peak and Terrace Mountain. A road follows this cleft down into Mammoth Hot Springs or up onto the plateau, through Gardners Hole, and into Yellowstone National Park beyond. During the summer many people stop here to look at Rustic Falls. But now, in winter, only a few people stop here. They come on snowmobiles, or like myself today, on cross-country skis.

There are Bighorn sheep on the rock outcroppings above. They inhabit steep, rocky slopes and alpine areas in Yellowstone Park. In the summer, the bighorn are found in the higher reaches of Yellowstone's northeast sector, but during the winter months they migrate to the lower elevations around Mammoth Hot Springs and Gardiner, Montana.



Both sexes of bighorn show a white rump patch which easily distinguishes them from other Yellowstone ungulates. The rams may weigh up to 200 pounds and have massive horns which curl a partial to a complete circle. The ewes are smaller with horns which curve slightly backward.

Except for the Bighorn sheep, I am here alone. The wind whispers the distant cry of a coyote. The winter sunlight streams in at a low, hard angle. It causes the yellowish colored lichens covering the rock faces to glow, seemingly with their own inner light.

This place is known as Golden Gate. It is an apt name. And Rustic Falls is an apt keeper for the gate.



Rustic Falls



Rustic Falls - 40 ft. approx.

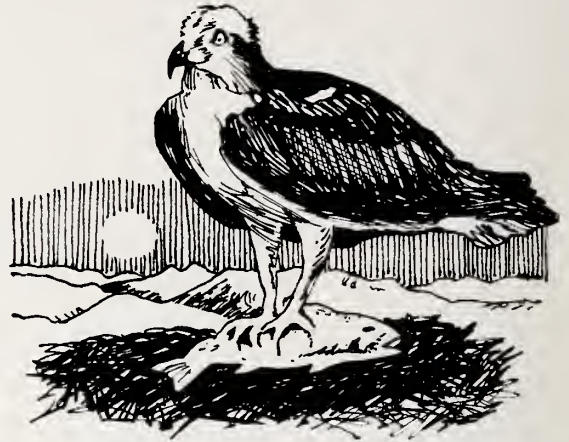
RIBBONS OF WATER

OSPREY FALLS

Osprey Falls is at the end of a long, steep climb into Sheepeater Canyon. There are roadside viewpoints as one travels the dirt road around Bunsen Peak, but the trail allows descent to the base of the waterfall.

While descending the trail today, I saw a small herd of elk grazing under the fall colored canopy of an aspen grove.

Osprey Falls is not visible until the last moment when the trail rounds a corner and ends at a large rock which forms a convenient viewing platform. The view from here is ample reward for the effort required to reach it.



It is hot, muggy, and confined in Sheepeater Canyon this afternoon. Overhead, thunderclouds are building up. The cool mist from Osprey Falls is refreshing. Where it hits the walls of the canyon, various mosses and ferns grow in profusion.

“Sheepeater” was the name given to a small band of Native Americans who inhabited this portion of Yellowstone until 1871. The name comes from the prominence the Bighorn sheep played in their diet. A sub-tribe of the Shoshone Indians, the Sheepeaters did not acquire horses and guns with the advent of Europeans into their homelands. They retired to the Yellowstone region, built brush lodges to live in and continued to hunt and forage on foot. They found protection and little competition here.

The osprey is nicknamed the “Fish Eagle” in many countries because it feeds entirely on fish. The osprey catches fish by hovering, and then plunging feet first into the water. The Douglas fir snags and rocky pinnacles in Sheepeater Canyon provide nesting sites for the osprey, and are reused year after year.

I am impressed with the contrast between the Sheepeaters and the osprey, and with the contrast between the white, foaming display of Osprey Falls and the dark, volcanic rock walls of Sheepeater Canyon.





Osprey Falls - 150 ft. approx.

RIBBONS OF WATER

TOWER FALLS

Tower Falls, apparently, is named for the tower-like rock formations which surround it. They look like the remnants of fortified turrets perched atop ancient, crumbling castles.

Near here is an historic ford across the Yellowstone River, used by Native Americans long before the coming of the first Yellowstone visitors. No doubt these towering rock formations watched the Bannock Indians crossing the river during their yearly migrations to and from the bison hunts on the plains to the east of Yellowstone.

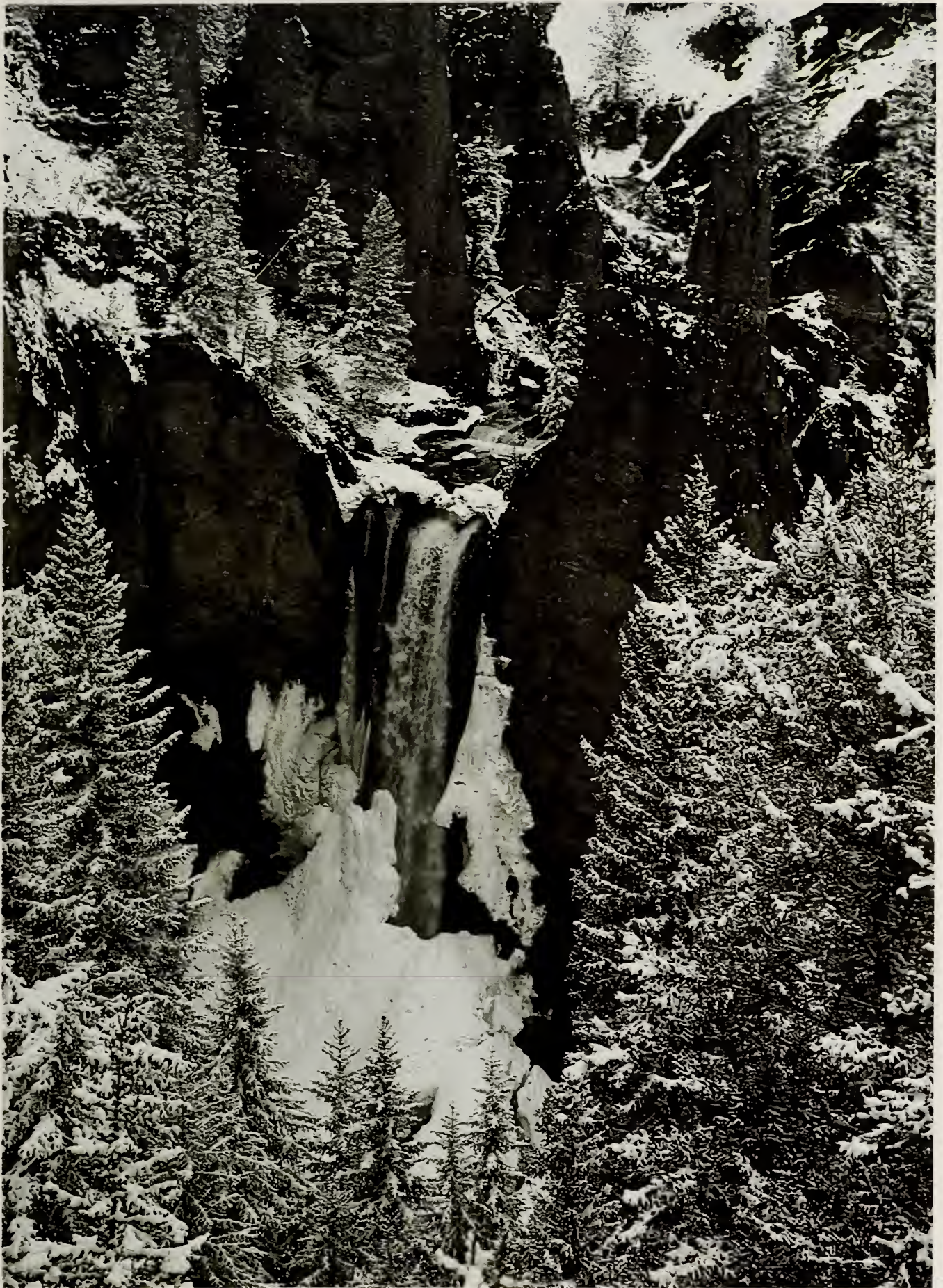
Today, there are no castles, and there are no Native American hunting parties using the ford. Instead, a short trail leads from the parking lot, past the General Store and the public toilets, to the viewpoint above Tower Falls.

Yellowstone visitors from around the world stand there in a semi-arid environment, surrounded by sagebrush, Douglas fir, and Unita ground squirrels, watching as Tower Creek flows between its namesake rock formations and plummets into the canyon it has carved for itself.

Down there it is cool and moist. The waterfall dashes itself on the rocks at the bottom, sending off drifting clouds of mist which support lush vegetation. A steep trail leads one down into the canyon, through the mist, to the base of Tower Falls. A rainbow dances down there in the mist.



Tower Falls



Tower Falls - 132 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER

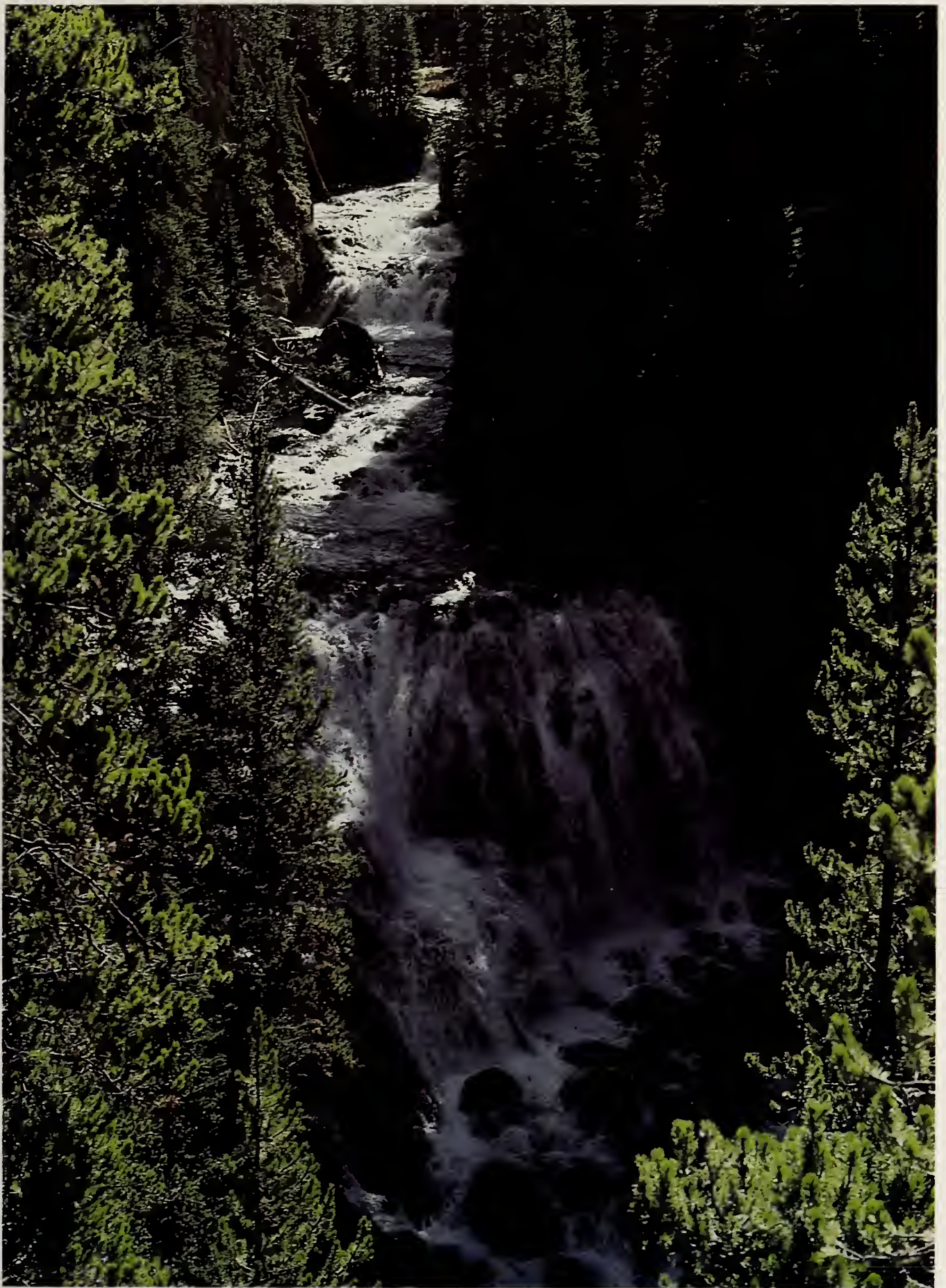
KEPLER CASCADES

Kepler Cascades is often missed even though it sits right next to one of Yellowstone's major roadways. I think many people pass up this beautiful cascade on the Firehole River because they are in a hurry to see the well known sights surrounding Old Faithful Geyser. The stop at Kepler Cascades is worth the effort though.

Today, a belted kingfisher flies about in the small canyon below. This impressive bird, as its name implies, makes a living by fishing. The kingfisher seeks out exposed perches above a stream, river, or lake from which it launches diving attacks on small fish.

Some Plains Indian tribes carried the skins of kingfishers with them into battles. Warriors believed that the rapid movements of the kingfisher would be transferred to them, enabling them to escape enemy bullets and arrows. In medieval England, the dried bodies of kingfishers were kept in homes as a protection against lightning.





Kepler Cascades - 150 ft. total

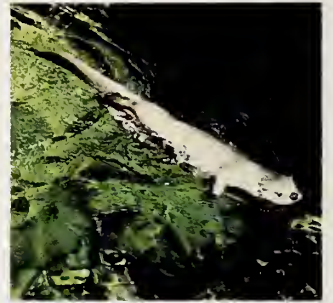
RIBBONS OF WATER _____ CASCADES OF THE FIREHOLE AND FIREHOLE FALLS

The Firehole River has carved a canyon for itself along a crack between two ancient lava flows. During its descent down the Firehole Canyon, the Firehole River makes two substantial drops—the Cascades of the Firehole and Firehole Falls.

Driving up the canyon I saw a bald eagle sitting in a tree. A generation ago, the bald eagle was widely distributed throughout the United States. Hunting, poison, and environmental pollution have decimated the population to the point where the bald eagle is presently considered an endangered species. The opportunity to watch a bald eagle soaring on a thermal updraft or skimming over water with talons extended, ready to scoop up a fish, is rare today.

Distinguishing characteristics of the bald eagle include a pronounced white head, a hooked beak, deeply-curved talons, and a seven foot wingspan. The bald eagle is truly an impressive bird.

Bald eagles seek out perches high above open water where they can watch for the fish and waterfowl which constitute the major portion of their diets.



This bald eagle had intense yellow eyes which seemed to be seeing everything, including the river otter playing in the pool downstream.





Firehole Falls - 40 ft.

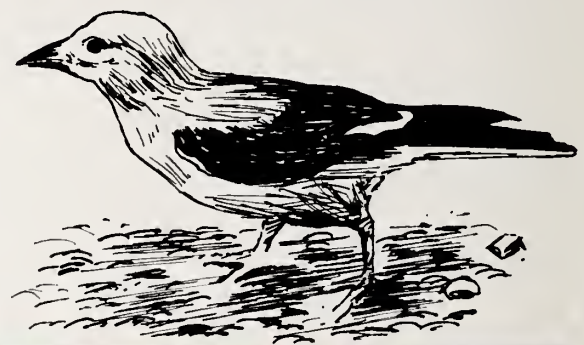
RIBBONS OF WATER

GIBBON FALLS

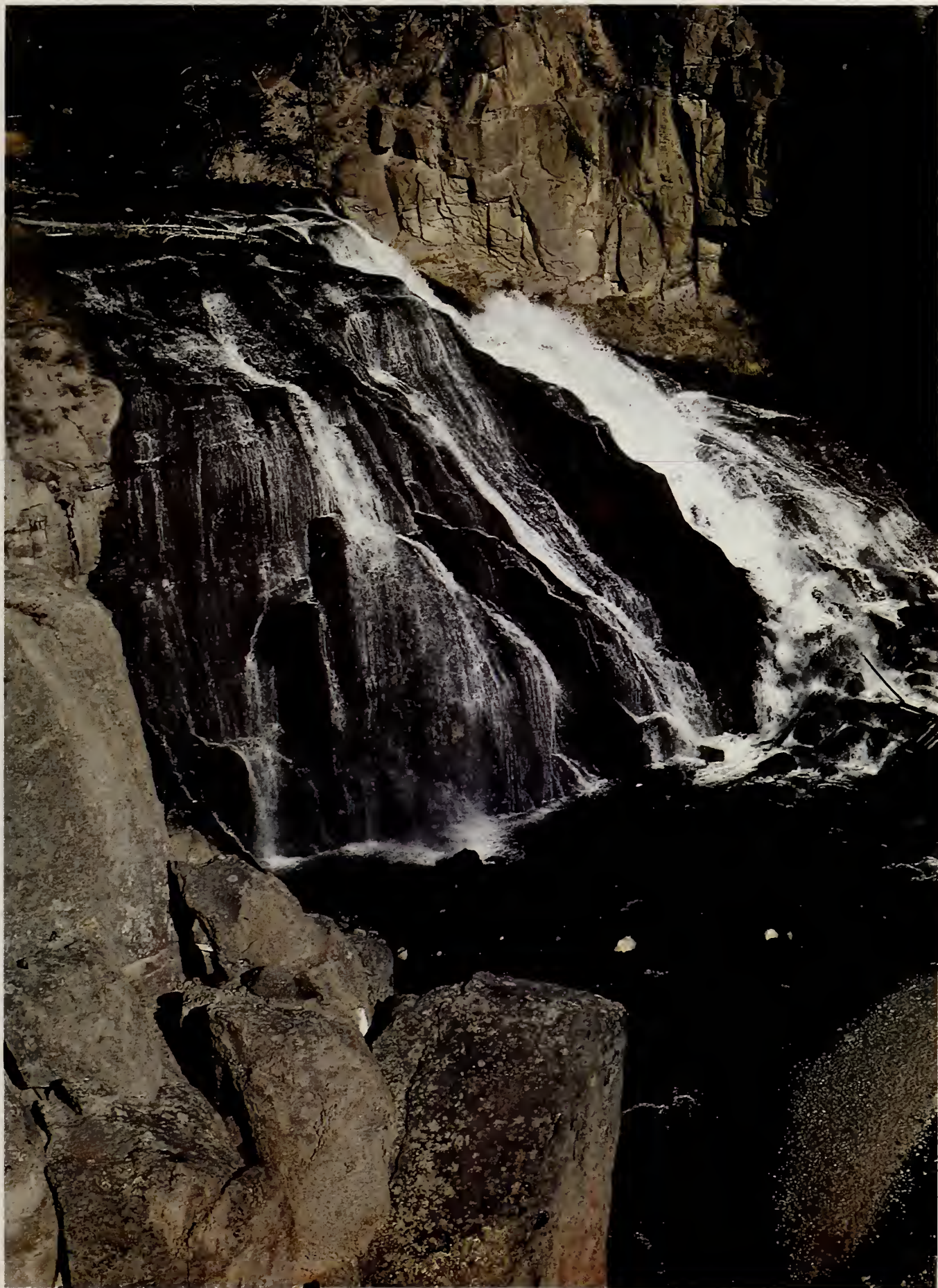
In between watching the antics of a Clark's nutcracker—a handsome, curious bird with the combined characteristics of the crow, the woodpecker, and the jay which works its audience as an accomplished begger—I met a man at the Gibbon Falls overlook who told me that he drove stagecoaches through Yellowstone National Park in the early 1900s.

He said that in those days the road passed over the ridge east of Gibbon Falls. There was no view of the waterfall from the road. Visitors who wanted to see Gibbon Falls had to scramble down a steep trail to a viewpoint. The return to the waiting stagecoaches involved pulling oneself up by bushes and roots.

He said that, except for the scenery, there had been many changes in Yellowstone since his days here. The scenery was still spectacular. I looked down at Gibbon Falls and hoped that it would be the same when I was his age and visited again.



Gibbon Falls



Gibbon Falls - 84 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER VIRGINIA CASCADE

Up until 1917, 600 stagecoaches and 3,000 horses provided the chief form of transportation through Yellowstone National Park. Tours of the park lasted for several days and were very popular. On the last day of these tours, stagecoaches loaded with visitors traveled The Cutoff Road from the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone to Norris Junction, and then on to Mammoth Hot Springs and the railroad terminus in Gardiner, Montana.



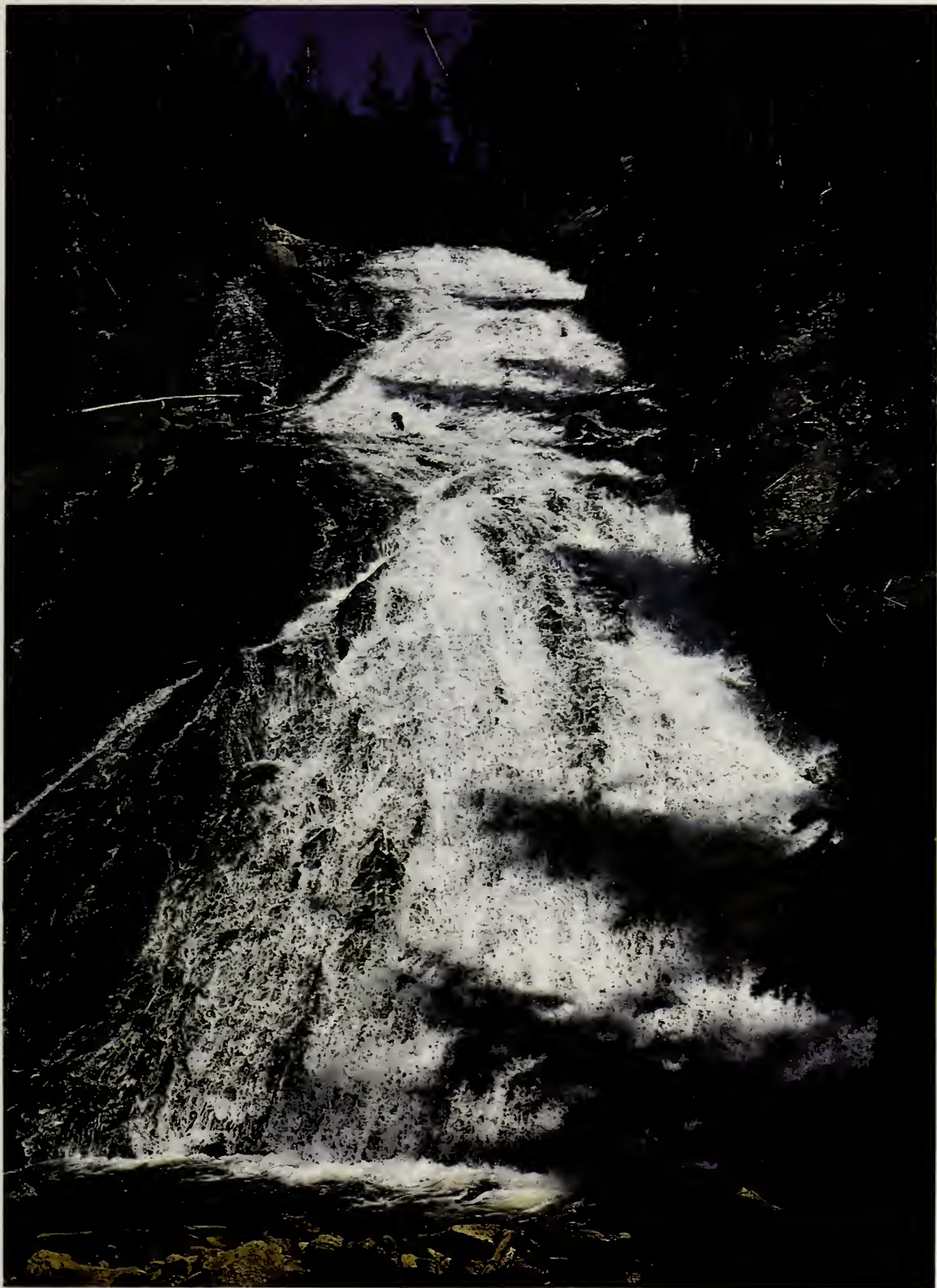
Along the way, park visitors would sing popular songs and shout the names of their home states to passengers on other stagecoaches. And they would stop at Virginia Cascade. There was no choice really; the road went right beside the Gibbon River to the foot of the cascade named for the wife of Charles Gibson, president of the Yellowstone Park Association, an early park concessionaire.

Those visitors would pose for “views” of themselves at the base of Virginia Cascade. Those views, of course, had all the required calm and social demeanor of the Victorian era. No matter that they were in the middle of a wilderness, those visitors carefully posed as they stood in fashionable traveling clothes or linen dusters and watched the water cascading down the smooth rock face in front of them.

Today, the main park roadway by-passes Virginia Cascade and it is all but neglected. Not many people follow the loop road which goes to Virginia Cascade, even though it is a prime example of the Yellowstone wilderness which can be found within a short distance of the more heavily traveled, “tamed” portions of the park.



Virginia Cascade



Virginia Cascade - 60 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER

LEWIS FALLS

John Colter, paragon of the mountain men, is the first explorer to be widely associated with the Yellowstone region. It is thought that he may have traversed this area in the winter of 1807.

During the return of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1806, Colter was persuaded to join two fur trappers bound for the upper reaches of the Yellowstone River. The Lewis and Clark Expedition had, the year before, followed the meanderings of the Missouri and Columbia River systems across the unknown expanse of the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase to reach the Pacific Ocean. Colter, closer to home than he had been in two years, felt he would be "lonely" in St. Louis. He asked for, and received, a release from his services to the Corps of Discovery.



By the winter of 1807, Colter was employed by Manuel Lisa as a traveling salesman with orders to convince Indians to trade at Lisa's fort.

Traveling alone, and on foot, Colter may have penetrated what is now Yellowstone National Park. Supposedly, he saw the lake, the river, and the waterfall named for Meriwether Lewis, co-captain of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Lewis Falls, now, as then, starts the Lewis River on its journey down off the Yellowstone plateau.





Lewis Falls - 30 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER

MOOSE FALLS

Crawfish Creek flows over a rock ledge to form Moose Falls. True to the name of this waterfall, a moose browses today in the willow thickets just downstream.

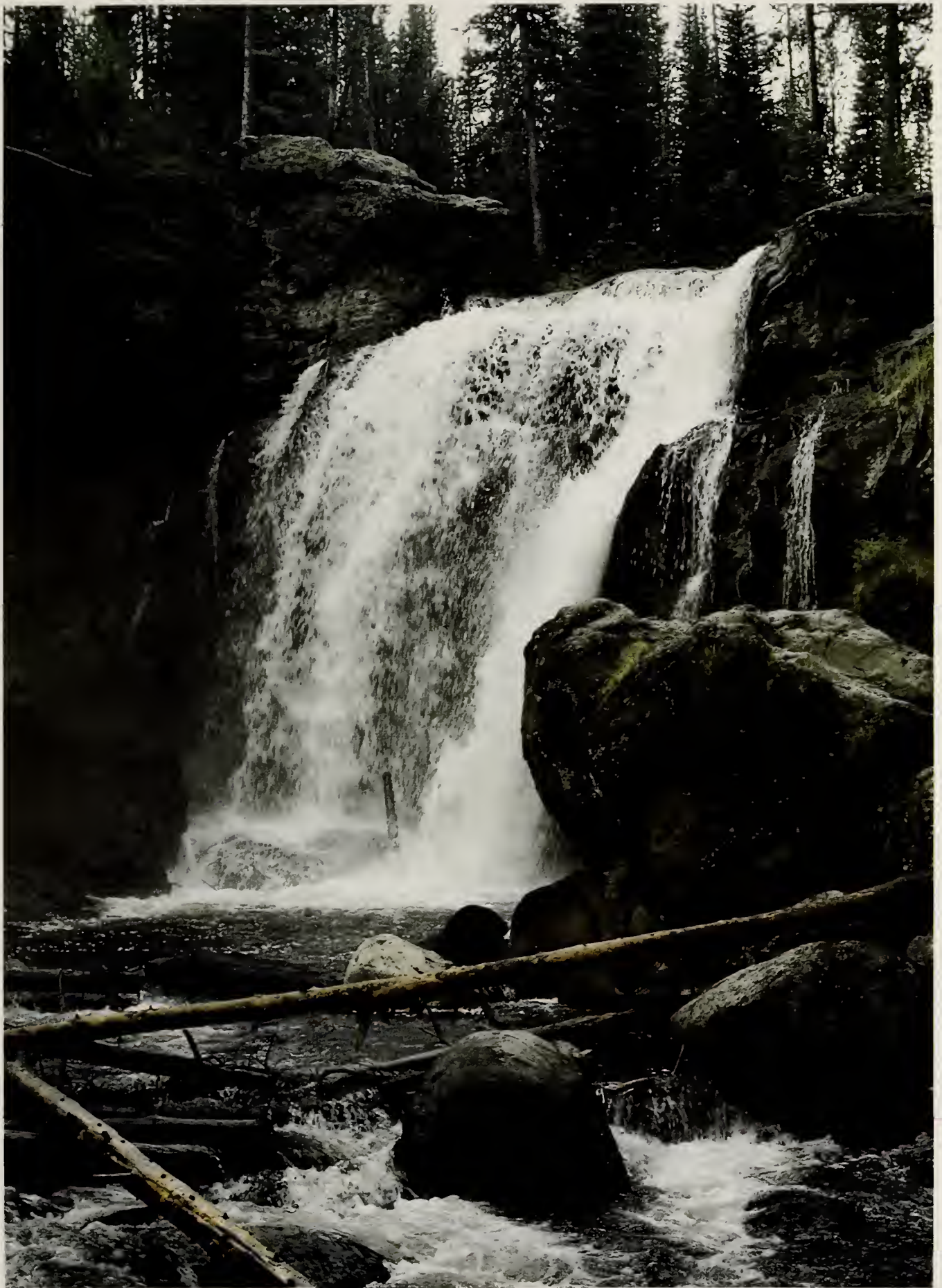
Moose are the largest members of the North American deer family. A moose may equal a horse in size, may weigh up to 500 pounds, and may stand 5-6 feet tall at the shoulder. Moose are easily recognized by a heavy, hump-backed body, stilt-like legs, a pendulous muzzle on a big head, and massive, broad-bladed antlers.

Usually moose remain solitary, but occasionally may travel in groups of 2-4 and can be seen throughout Yellowstone National Park.

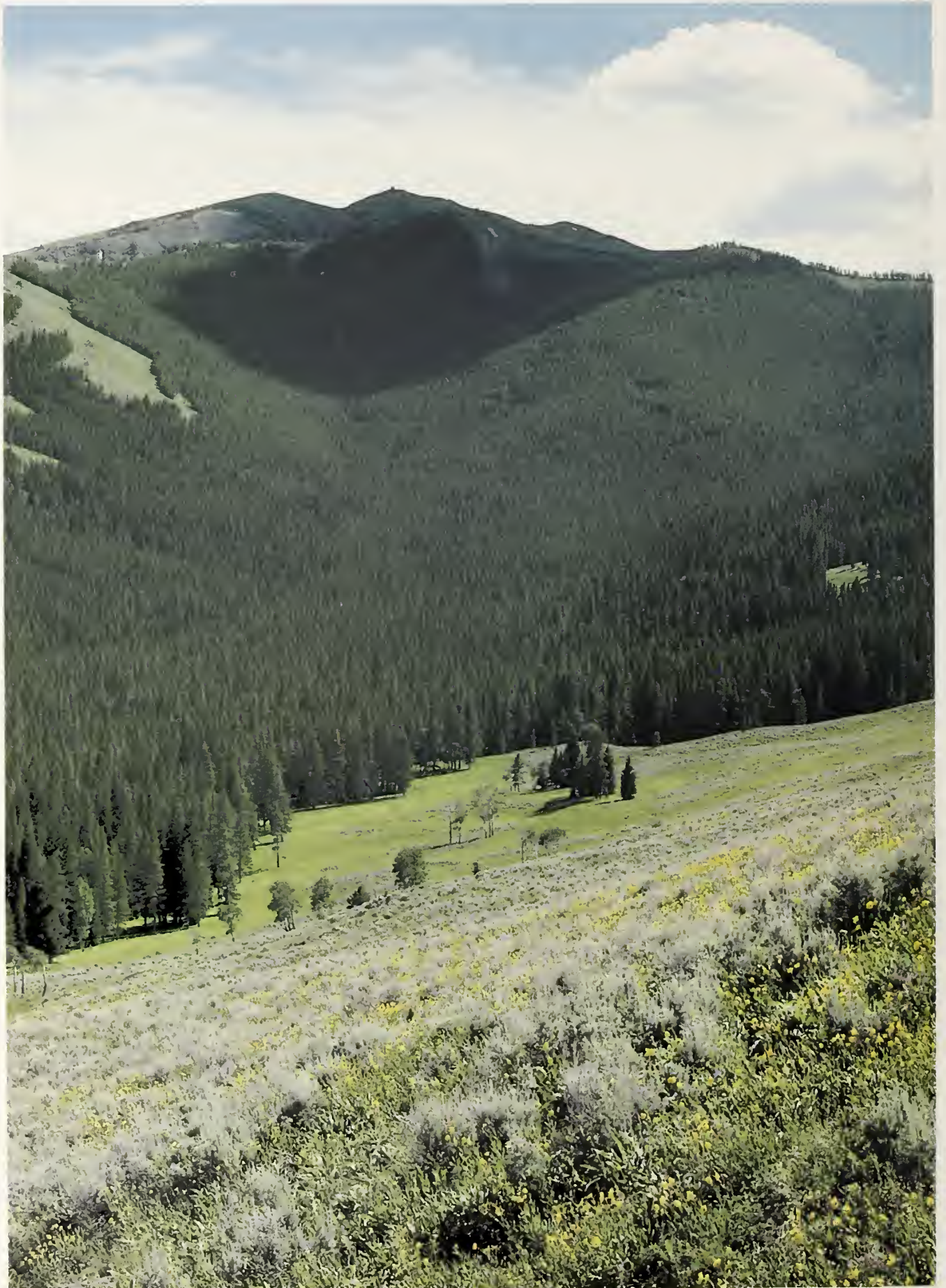
Moose are primarily land browsers, feeding on twigs, bark, and leaves, but are often seen in the summer, standing belly-deep in marshes, feeding on aquatic plants. They often probe the bottom of the marsh, keeping their heads under water for 30-40 seconds at a time.

Perhaps the first explorer to stand at the base of this waterfall also saw a moose browsing in the willow thickets. If so, we share a common experience. Barely 100 yards from the main park road, the feeling of wilderness and isolation is strong here at Moose Falls.





Moose Falls - 30 ft.



WATERFALLS AND CASCADES OF THE GRAND CANYON OF THE YELLOWSTONE

The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone is, as my friend Hugh Crandall says, a place where the Yellowstone River has carved a series of “cathedrals end to end for twenty miles.”

The rock walls of the canyon are like extended stained glass windows which have been colored yellow, red, pink, and ocher by the percolation of thermal gases through an ancient lava flow. At the bottom of the canyon, 1,000-1,500 feet below the edges, the Yellowstone River continues carving cathedrals.

The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone is certainly one of the most impressive natural wonders in Yellowstone National Park. But if you spend a day at Artist Point asking people why they came, or what they thought most impressive, most will answer, “the falls.”



RIBBONS OF WATER

LOWER FALLS

If there is one waterfall for which Yellowstone National Park is known it is surely Lower Falls here in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Twice as tall as Niagara Falls, the 308-foot tall Lower Falls has come to be regarded as a symbol not only of Yellowstone National Park but of the wilderness preservation philosophy as well.

There are several vantage points on both sides of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone from which Lower Falls can be viewed: Grand View, Uncle Tom's Trail, Artist Point, Lookout Point, Red Rock, and Inspiration Point. There is even a steep trail which descends to the very edge of the Lower Falls.

Rudyard Kipling, during a visit to Yellowstone National Park in 1889, viewed Lower Falls and wrote:

Be it known to you that the Yellowstone River has occasion to run through a gorge. . . Up to that time nothing particular happens to the Yellowstone, its banks being only rocky, rather steep, and plentifully adorned with pines. At the falls it comes round a corner, green, solid, ribbed with a little foam and not more than thirty yards wide. Then it goes over still green and rather more solid than before. After a minute or two you, sitting upon a rock directly above the drop, begin to understand that something has occurred; that the river has jumped a huge distance between solid cliff walls and what looks like the gentle froth of ripples lapping the sides of the gorge below is really the outcome of great waves. And the river yells aloud; but the cliffs do not allow the yells to escape.

(From Sea to Sea: Letters of Travel, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910.)



Lower Falls - 308 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER

UPPER FALLS

The Upper Falls of the Yellowstone River is a majestic waterfall in its own right and certainly surrenders none of its splendor to the Lower Falls below.

I am sitting at a point directly opposite Upper Falls. Despite the numbers of people around, I have a feeling that this performance of **Ribbons of Water** is being played just for me.

I can feel the surge of the water into the canyon below. I can, like Kipling, hear the yells of the river. And sitting here in the sunshine, I can feel a certain sense of communion with the swallows diving through the mist and spray in front of Upper Falls.



Upper Falls



Upper Falls - 109 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER _____

CRYSTAL FALLS

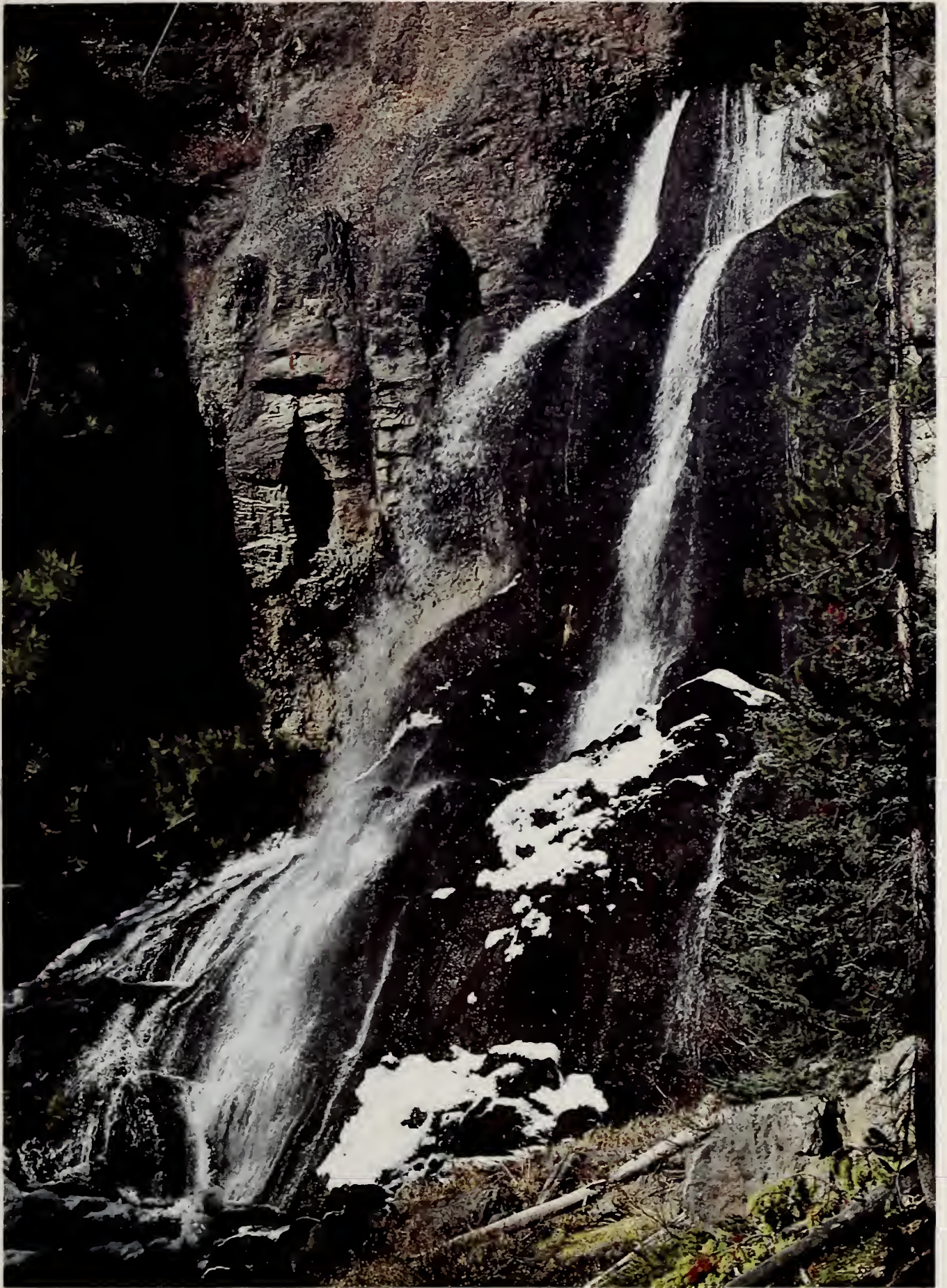
I don't know how many times I have been to this viewpoint and stood, mesmerized, watching Upper Falls. But I do know that in a majority of those times I have failed to look across the canyon at Crystal Falls. Whenever I do see Crystal Falls, I am amazed that such a beautiful waterfall could be so easily overlooked.

Perhaps it is the overpowering presence of Upper Falls. Perhaps it is the fact the Crystal Falls is coyly hidden in the trees across the canyon. Whatever the reason, Crystal Falls makes a concerted effort for notoriety before joining the Yellowstone River mid-way between the Upper and Lower Falls.

Those sudden views, when Crystal Falls takes one by surprise, are indicative of the special magic imbued in Yellowstone's **Ribbons of Water**.



Crystal Falls



Crystal Falls - 129 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER SILVER CORD CASCADE

I have come tonight with a few friends to sit and watch the full moon rising over the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

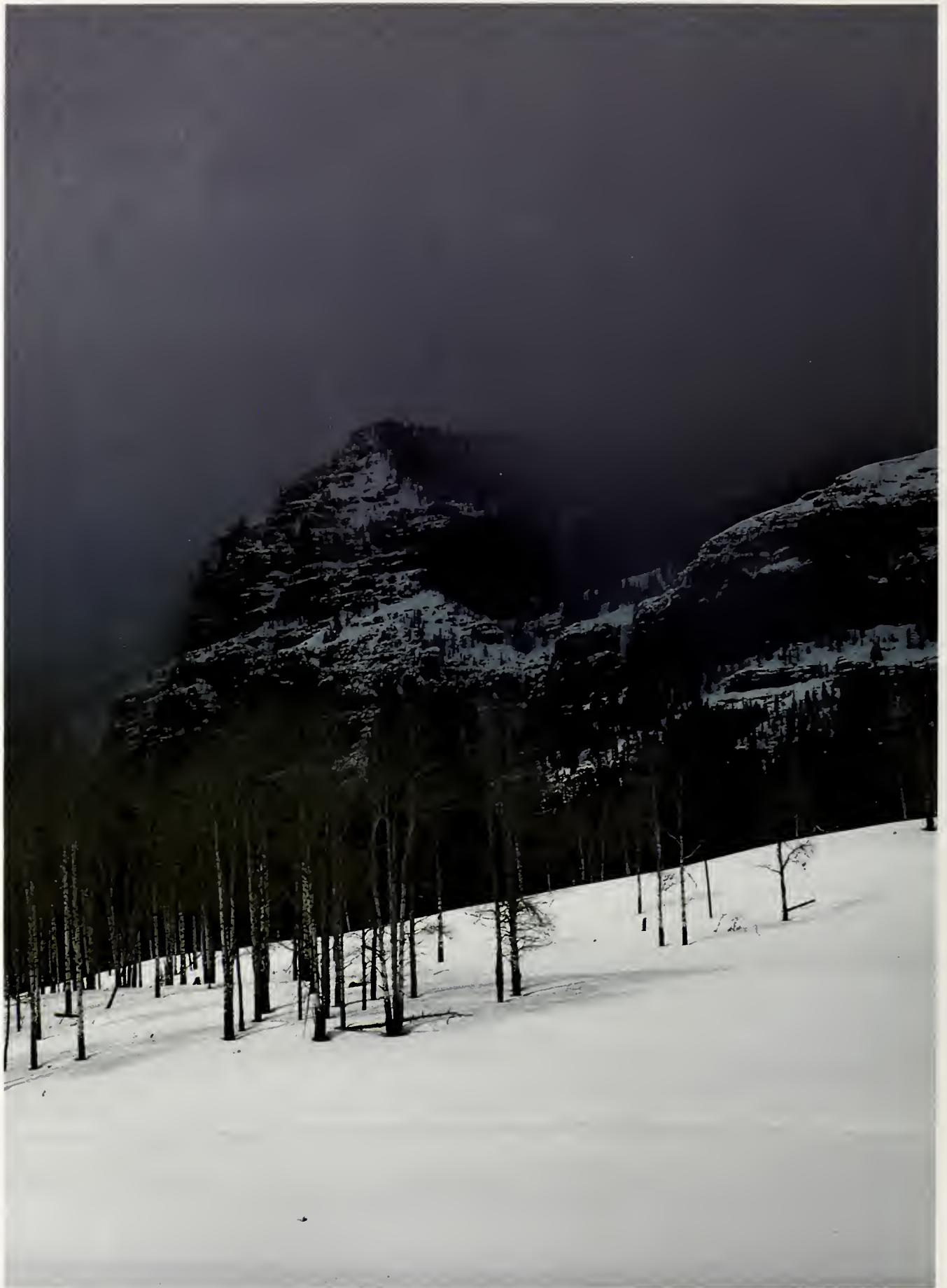
The moon rises slowly over the Mirror Plateau. It is like the beginning of time.

Across the canyon, a thin filament of molten silver streams down the length of the canyon wall. Someone begins playing a flute. The music of the flute, and the magic of Silver Cord Cascade, intertwine and dance together through the changing shades of moonlight in the canyon.





Silver Cord Cascade - 1300 ft. approx.



BACKCOUNTRY WATERFALLS AND CASCADES



The backcountry of Yellowstone National Park begins about 100 yards from the edge of any road or developed location. Yellowstone's backcountry offers one the opportunity to view natural wonders which have been preserved in a relatively unchanged state.

Yellowstone's backcountry gives one the opportunity to commune with portions of our wilderness heritage.

The backcountry of Yellowstone National Park covers an area of 3,472 square miles. Hidden in that vastness are several impressive **Ribbons of Water**.



RIBBONS OF WATER

LITTLE GIBBON FALLS

A good example of the virtually unchanged wilderness quality of Yellowstone's back-country, Little Gibbon Falls is situated near a major roadway, is skirted by an established hiking trail, but is seldom visited.

I am visiting today. It is fall—a good time to be in the back-country. I haven't seen another person, there seem to be no bugs, and the air has the feel of the first bite from a cool, crisp apple.



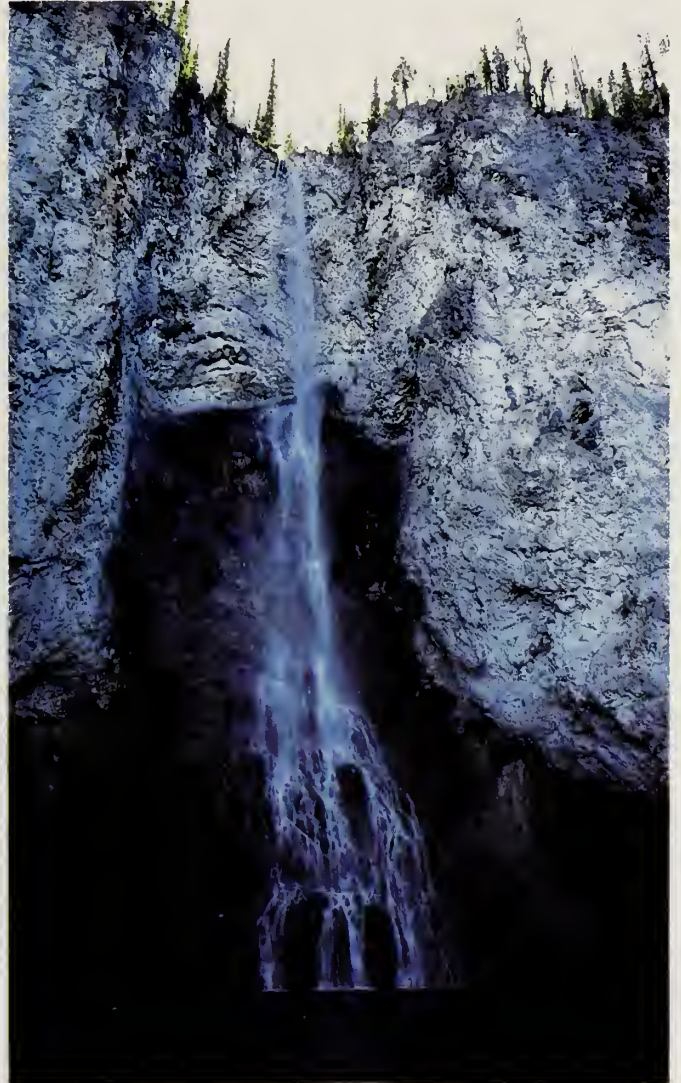
Little Gibbon Falls - 25 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER WRAITH AND FAIRY FALLS

The sound of water sliding over Wraith Falls is calming my anger. Soon it will be easier to return to my truck at the trailhead in which I have locked my only set of ignition keys. But for a while longer, I would like to sit here in the sunshine amidst the smell of dried and decaying leaves and grasses.



Wraith Falls - 90 ft. approx.



Fairy Falls - 197 ft.

A beautiful waterfall—one I would expect to find on a tropical island. The trees seem very large and the surrounding forest very dark. I see mushrooms growing on the decaying hulks of fallen trees. Off in the woods, an owl glides among the shadows like a ghost.

Would anyone see me if I went swimming in this pool at the base of the waterfall? And what if I came here some moonlit night? Would I see the little people gathered here at Fairy Falls?

RIBBONS OF WATER

MYSTIC FALLS

There are reports of grizzly bear sightings in this area. I am continually looking over my shoulder and a nagging feeling keeps telling me to leave.

But the spring sunshine is warm on these rocks and I would like to sit here a while longer letting the cares of winter flow over me like the water over Mystic Falls.

My herb tea is beginning to brew. Its earthy aroma matches the patina of the surrounding rocks and trees.



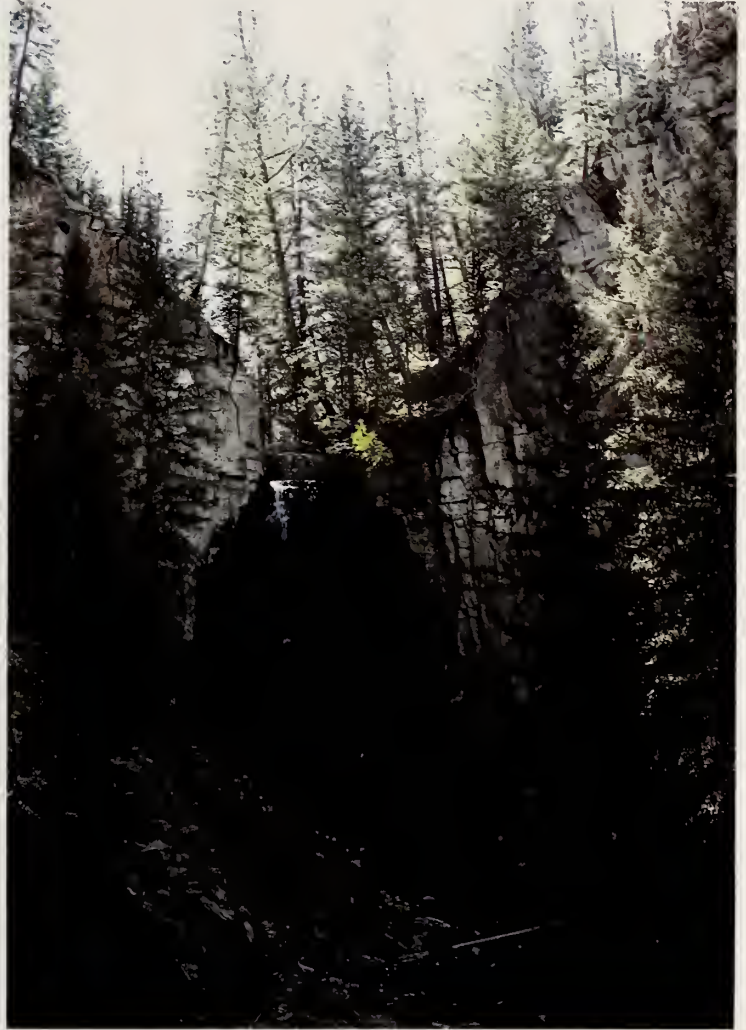
Mystic Falls - 70 ft. approx.

RIBBONS OF WATER KNOWLES AND LOST CREEK FALLS

Knowles Falls . . . the “3rd falls of the Yellowstone River.” A long, hot hike into the Black Canyon of the Yellowstone was compensated by a swim in the pool below Knowles Falls. The smooth, warm texture of the rocks transfer their stored heat to me now as I sit in the late autumn sunshine drying. A magpie struts nearby, watching for a handout.



Knowles Falls - 15 ft.



Lost Creek Falls - 47 ft. approx.

I spent a summer working at Roosevelt Lodge. Drinking water for the lodge came from Lost Creek. One of my duties was to check and maintain the water purification system.

Twice each week I would finish with that and then walk upstream to Lost Creek Falls. It was not far from the lodge building but the feeling of wilderness was very real. Once I saw a bear.

If caught sitting at the base of this waterfall I probably would have lost my job. Sitting here again today, I know why I always considered it time well spent, and worth the risk.

RIBBONS OF WATER _____

PLATEAU FALLS

My friend Lee Whittlesey, in the course of research for a book he is writing concerning the history of place names in Yellowstone National Park, found this photograph of Plateau Falls pasted into a typewritten, unpublished manuscript entitled **Souvenir of Wyoming** written by John G. White in 1926.

White explored the Thorofare Region of Yellowstone National Park in the 1920s. Only eight copies of the manuscript reporting his findings were ever made. We think he may have taken this photograph himself.

Most of White's work has been forgotten, so it is nice to be able to include what could be the first known photograph of Plateau Falls in **Ribbons of Water**.



Plateau Falls - 75 ft.

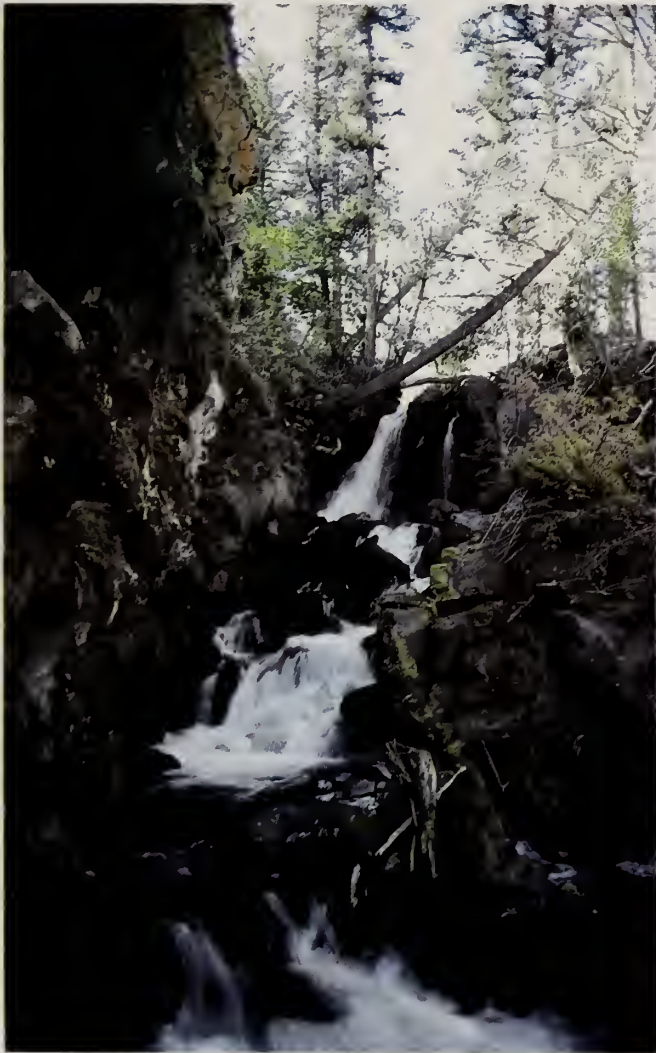
RIBBONS OF WATER “HIDDEN” FALLS AND FERN CASCADES

This waterfall is labeled only as “Falls” on the topographic map of Yellowstone National Park. I missed it the first time I looked for it, descended to the Yellowstone River, and then followed Blacktail Deer Creek back to the top of this drainage canyon.

I can see now that this waterfall is only a few yards away from the trail, but it is not easy to spot as it is cloistered in a small rock gorge and surrounded by a stand of trees.

Instead of “Falls,” I think Hidden Falls would be a better name.

Apparently several elk have died in this small canyon during previous winters. I see their sun bleached bones among the fireweed.



“Hidden” Falls - 30 ft. approx.

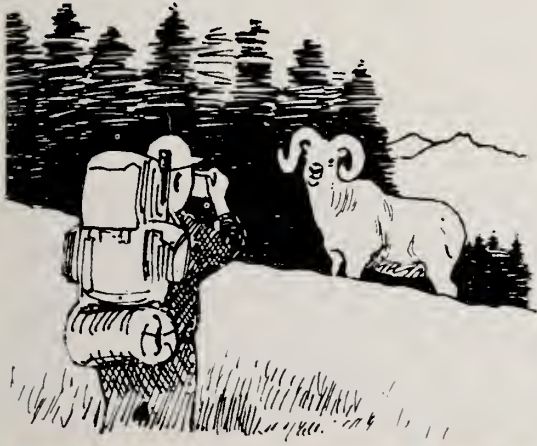


Fern Cascades

Fern Cascades . . . would be easy to overlook were it not for the luxuriant clumps of ferns along the banks.



CASCADE CORNER



Yellowstone National Park is full of waterfalls and cascades, but nowhere else can one find a more majestic concentration than in the southwestern corner—an area aptly known as Cascade Corner.

It is here that some of the huge lava flows from Yellowstone's geologic past ended and their edges today create splendid **Ribbons of Water** as rivers and streams flow off the backbone of the country, out of Yellowstone National park, and into the Snake River drainage system.



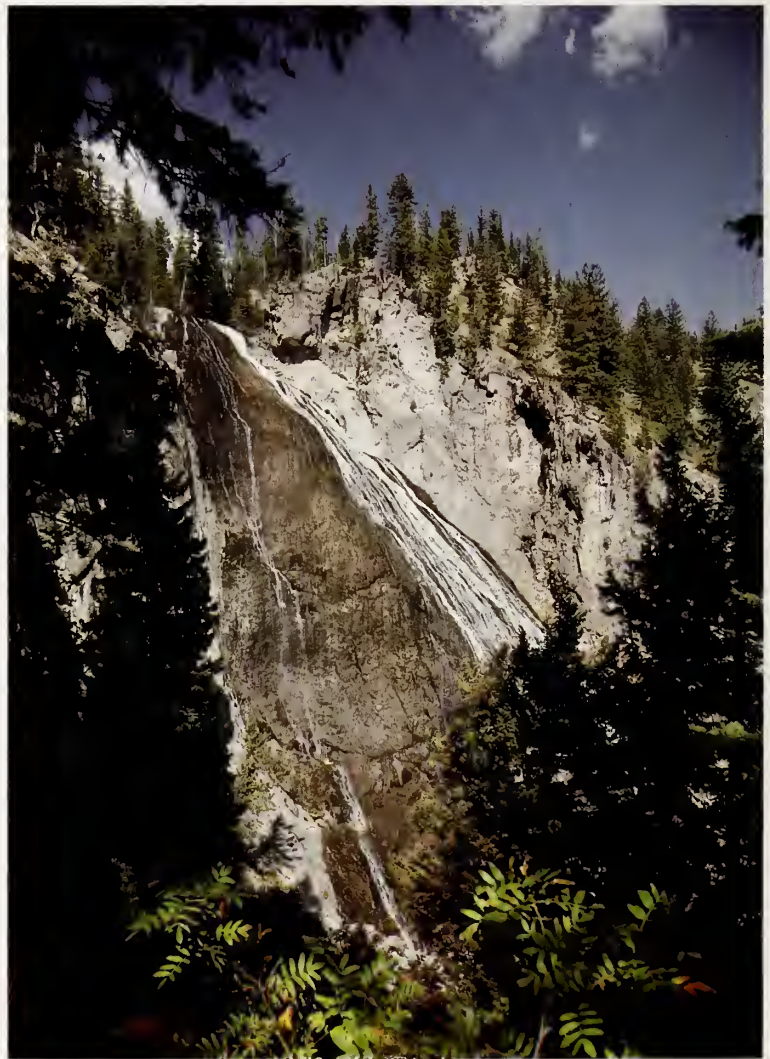
RIBBONS OF WATER

OUZEL FALLS

Ouzel Creek gets its name from the ouzel, or water dipper—a small bird that has learned to find its dinner by walking about on the bottoms of streams. I see them occasionally perched on a rock. Sometimes they bob their heads under the water. Sometimes they disappear with a quick hop and remain submerged for a minute or so.

The approach to Ouzel Falls is through an extensive bog and then requires a steep climb up the face of the plateau. Ouzel Falls slides off an extended rock face that marks the edge of an ancient lava flow. I can hear its thundering tonight in my camp at the southern end of the Bechler River Canyon. I am anticipating the waterfalls and cascades I will see tomorrow.

The river slides by in the dark, whispering its own mysteries. Off in the woods, a bull elk in rut whistles and thrashes the bushes.



Ouzel Falls - 230 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER COLONNADE AND IRIS FALLS

The trail up through the Bechler River Canyon is a steady climb. Resting now at Colonnade Falls I have the impression of Grecian gardens gone to seed and bisected by this double drop waterfall.

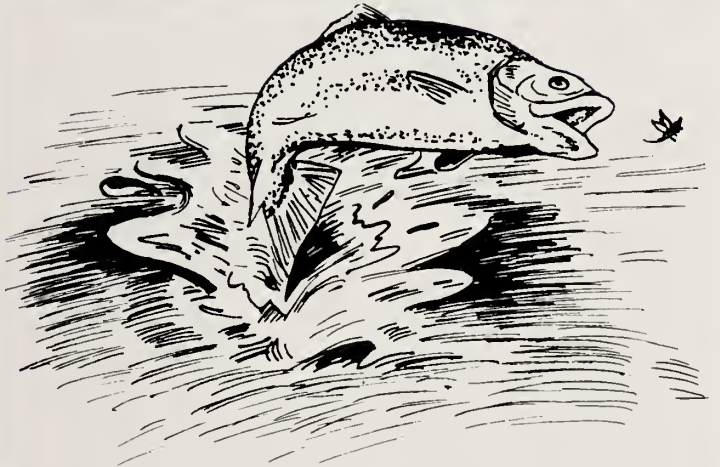
Two kingfishers are flying repeatedly back and forth across the face of the lower drop of Colonnade Falls while a rainbow dances in the spray below.



Colonnade Falls - Upper 35 ft., Lower 67 ft.



Iris Falls - 45 ft.



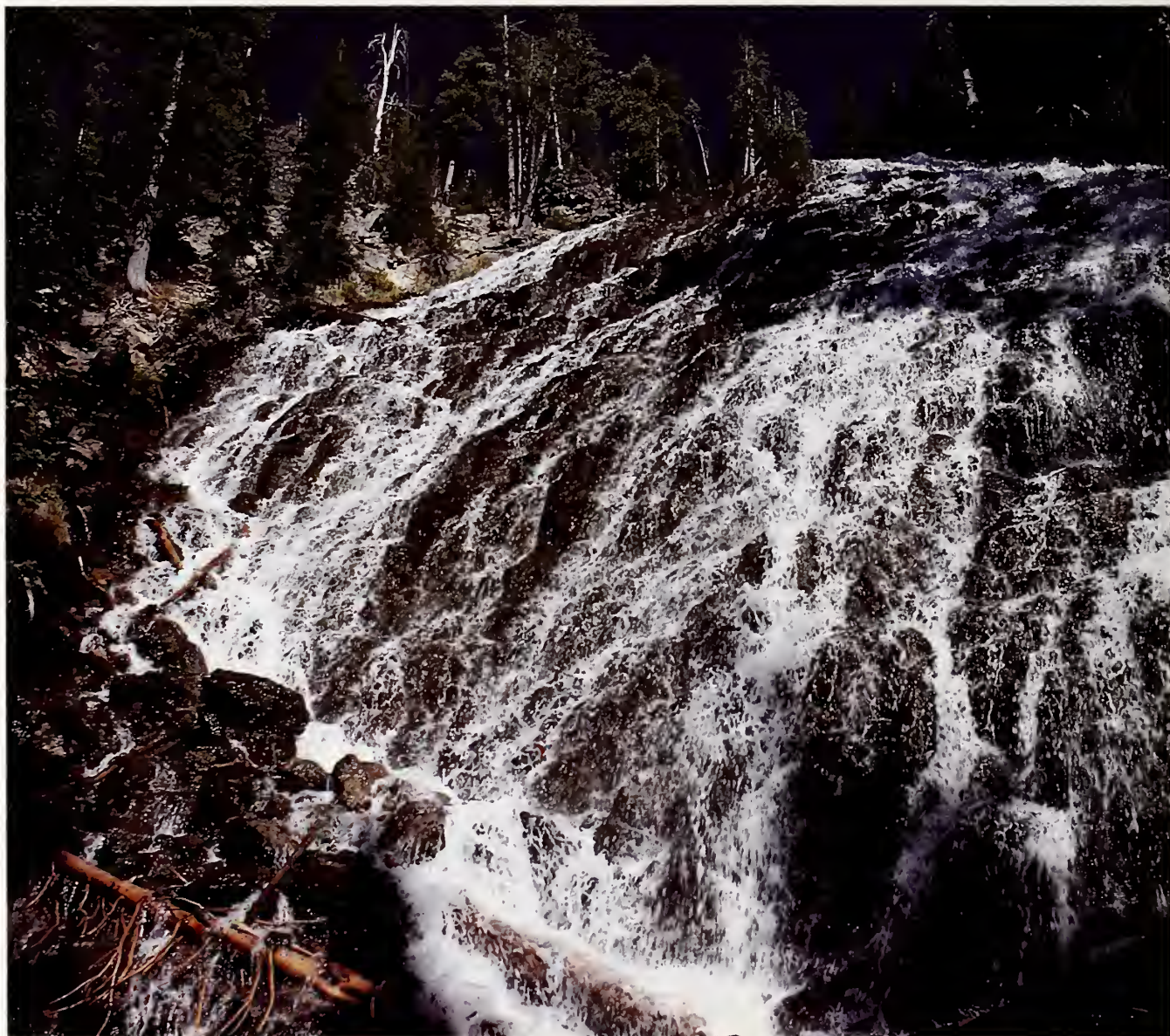
Iris Falls . . . enjoying a snack and funny thoughts of those people who rode over waterfalls such as this one in barrels. What would they look like bouncing through the rocky cascades around Treasure Island before shooting over Iris Falls into that trout pool below?

RIBBONS OF WATER _____ BATCHELDER COLUMN CASCADE

The sound of Batchelder Column Cascade rolling off the edge of the canyon wall announced my arrival at Three Rivers Junction.

The cascade itself is enormous, but seems to easily disappear into a series of beaver ponds below. There is a moose and her calf at the edge of the ponds.

Batchelder Column, a huge rock chimney-like structure stands guard at this upper end of the Bechler River Canyon.



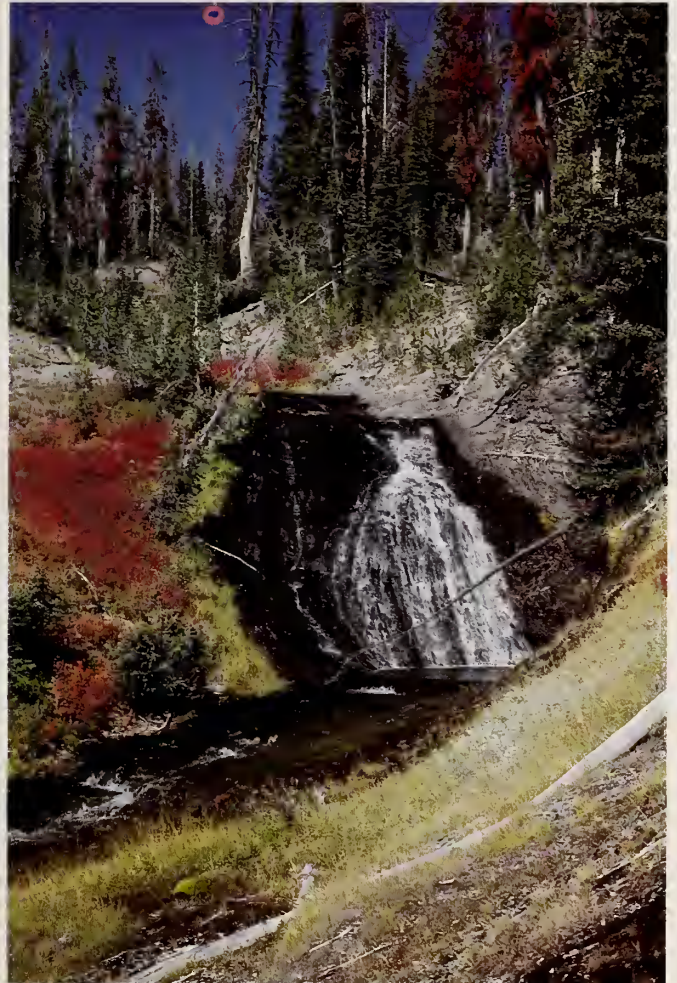
Batchelder Column Cascade - 260 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER QUIVER AND TEMPE CASCADES

On the Phillips Fork of the Bechler River, Quiver Cascades makes a series of drops as the water flows down to the junction. A recently killed moose has me watching for bears.



Quiver Cascades



Tempe Cascades



Cross-country map and compass navigation to Tempe Cascades on the Little Fork. I am deep in the wilderness backcountry of Yellowstone National Park here.

RIBBONS OF WATER

TWISTER AND “FALLS” FALLS

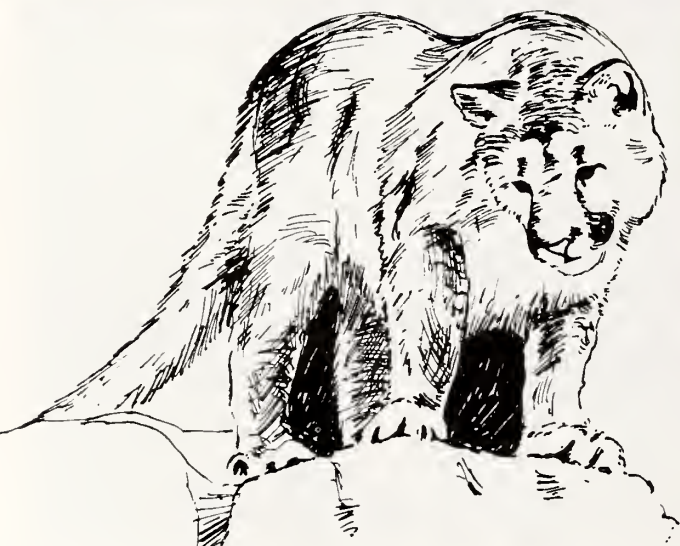
The labeling of my map for Twister Falls appears to be incorrect. To me, this is Twister Falls and not the “Falls” as the map says. The corkscrew route the water follows down the rock face seems to make the name Twister very appropriate for this waterfall.



Twister Falls - 55 ft.



“Falls” - 35 ft. approx.



This must be the “Falls” my map indicates. Somehow the labeling has gotten mixed up with Twister Falls. A wonderful sense of isolation in this backcountry wilderness.

It is easy to imagine myself as the first explorer to see this waterfall—there certainly are no signs of other people visiting here.

RIBBONS OF WATER UNION FALLS

Two tributaries of Mountain Ash Creek combine at the top of the rock face to form Union Falls.

I arrived in the gray light of first dawn. Union Falls gave the eerie impression of a shrouded figure frozen into stone and silently staring down the small canyon.



Union Falls - 250 ft.

RIBBONS OF WATER _____ RAGGED, TENDROY, GWINNA, SLUICEWAY AND WAHHI FALLS

On the Ferris Fork . . . Ragged, Tendroy, Gwinna, Sluiceway, and Wahhi Falls. These are mysterious names for these seldom visited backcountry waterfalls whose names remind me of Hawaii.

But Hawaii is a long way from this slope of the Continental Divide where I am sitting against the warm, smooth trunk of a wind fallen tree imagining myself as a mountain man.

My efforts in the backcountry are exposures on thin sheets of light sensitive emulsion. Will anyone understand their significance when I show up at the next rendezvous?

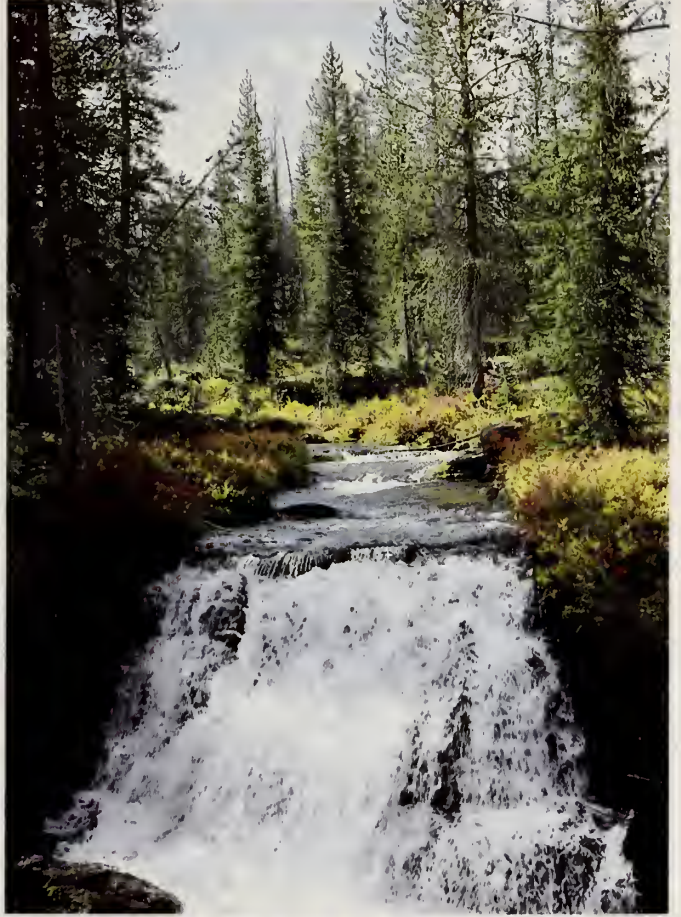


Ragged Falls - 45 ft.

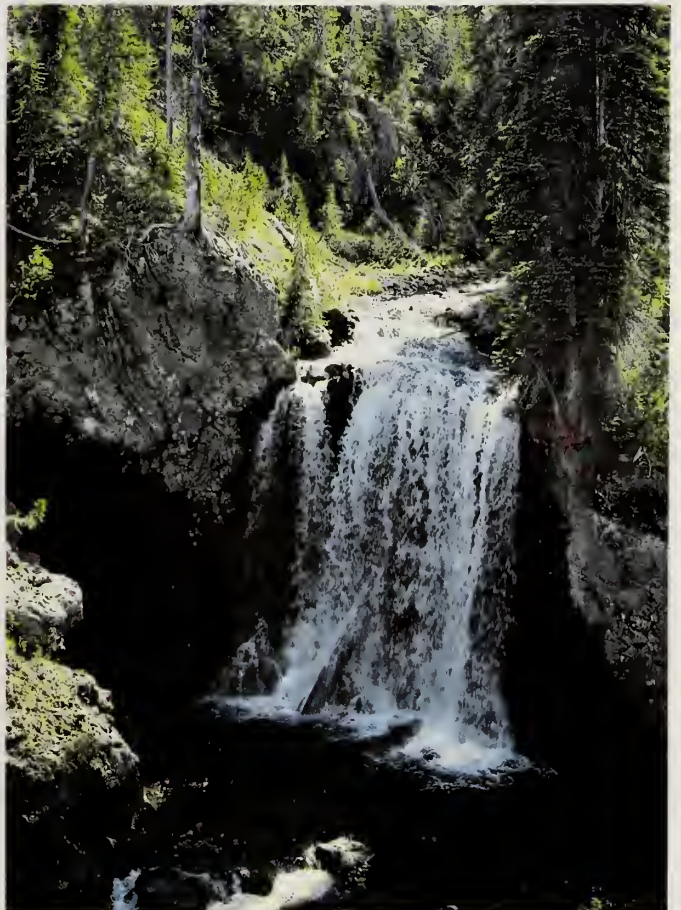
Tendoy Falls - 33 ft.



Gwinna Falls - 20 ft.



Sluiceway Falls - 35 ft.



Wahhi Falls - 36 ft. approx.

RIBBONS OF WATER

CASCADE ACRES, TERRACED AND RAINBOW FALLS

The weather is cold and wet with about 4 inches of snow already on the ground. I am following the fresh tracks of a moose as they lead along the Falls River in the general direction of Cascade Acres, Terraced Falls, and Rainbow Falls.

I have learned to follow animal trails when traveling cross-country. The animals seem to know the best ways to avoid difficult topography and obstacles. If there is an easy route between two points, the animals will find it.

Today a moose is going in my direction and I am following his dinner plate size footprints as if they were beacons in the fresh snow.



Cascade Acres



Rainbow Falls - 100 ft. approx.



Terraced Falls (Upper and Lower) - 150 ft. total

RIBBONS OF WATER SILVER SCARF AND CAVE FALLS

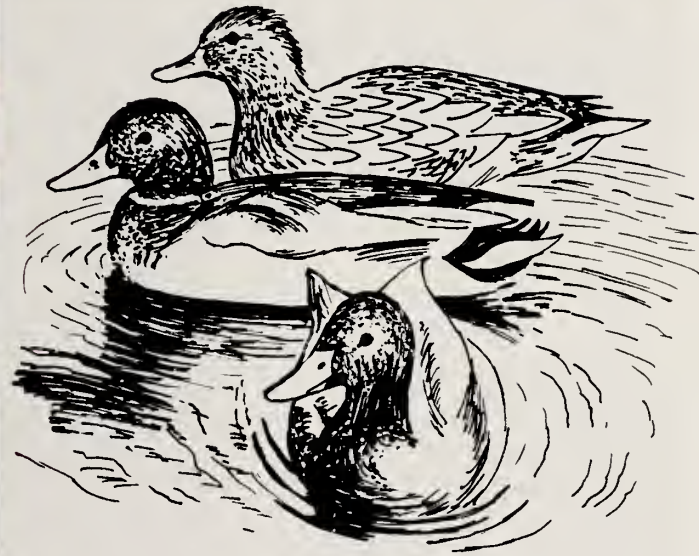
The origin of the name Silver Scarf Falls seems obvious—a silken silver ribbon of water tossed upon the landscape.



Silver Scarf Falls - 250 ft.



Cave Falls - 20 ft., 250 ft. wide



I am writing this inside the cave from which Cave Falls gets its name. This cave covers enough parking space for a large automobile and has ample headroom for a seven-foot-tall basketball player. It appears to have been carved out by the swirling action of water. Perhaps it is the remains of a large bubble or chamber which occurred in the lava which formed this rock.

Outside the entrance to the cave, Cave Falls extends 250 feet in an unbroken line of uniform height across the Falls River.

RIBBONS OF WATER

DUNANDA FALLS

The blisters on my feet occupied all my attention. I was thinking of the miles I had already come, and how many miles I had yet to travel.

I crested a small ridge and was surprised by Dunanda Falls, hidden in its tree-lined canyon below. All thoughts of my blisters disappeared as I sat and watched the waterfall and gave my spirit over to the rhythm of the falling water.

On the return hike, a mule deer bounded across the trail in front of me. Like a ballerina, it seemed to flow through the air.

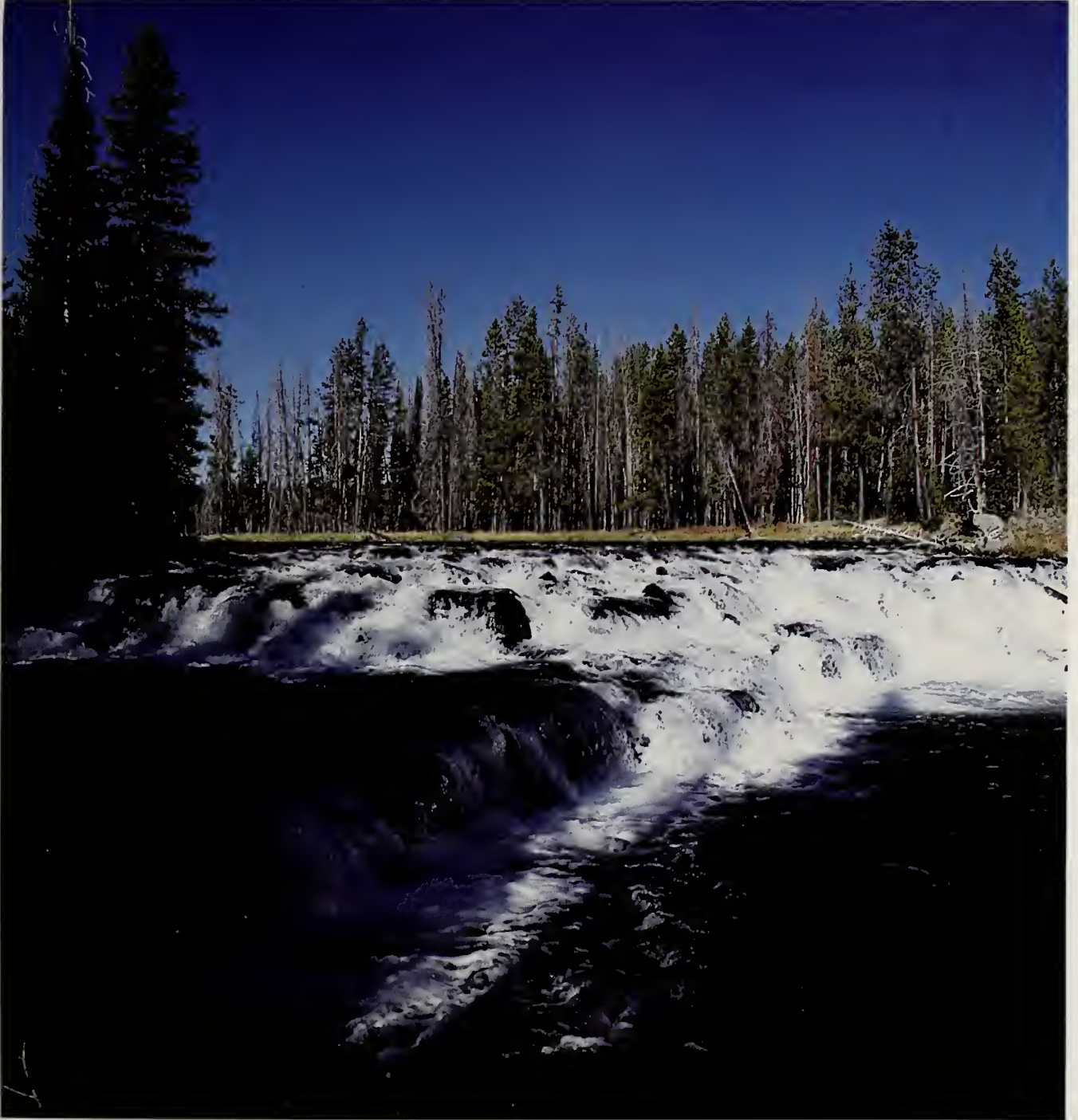


Dunanda Falls - 150 ft.

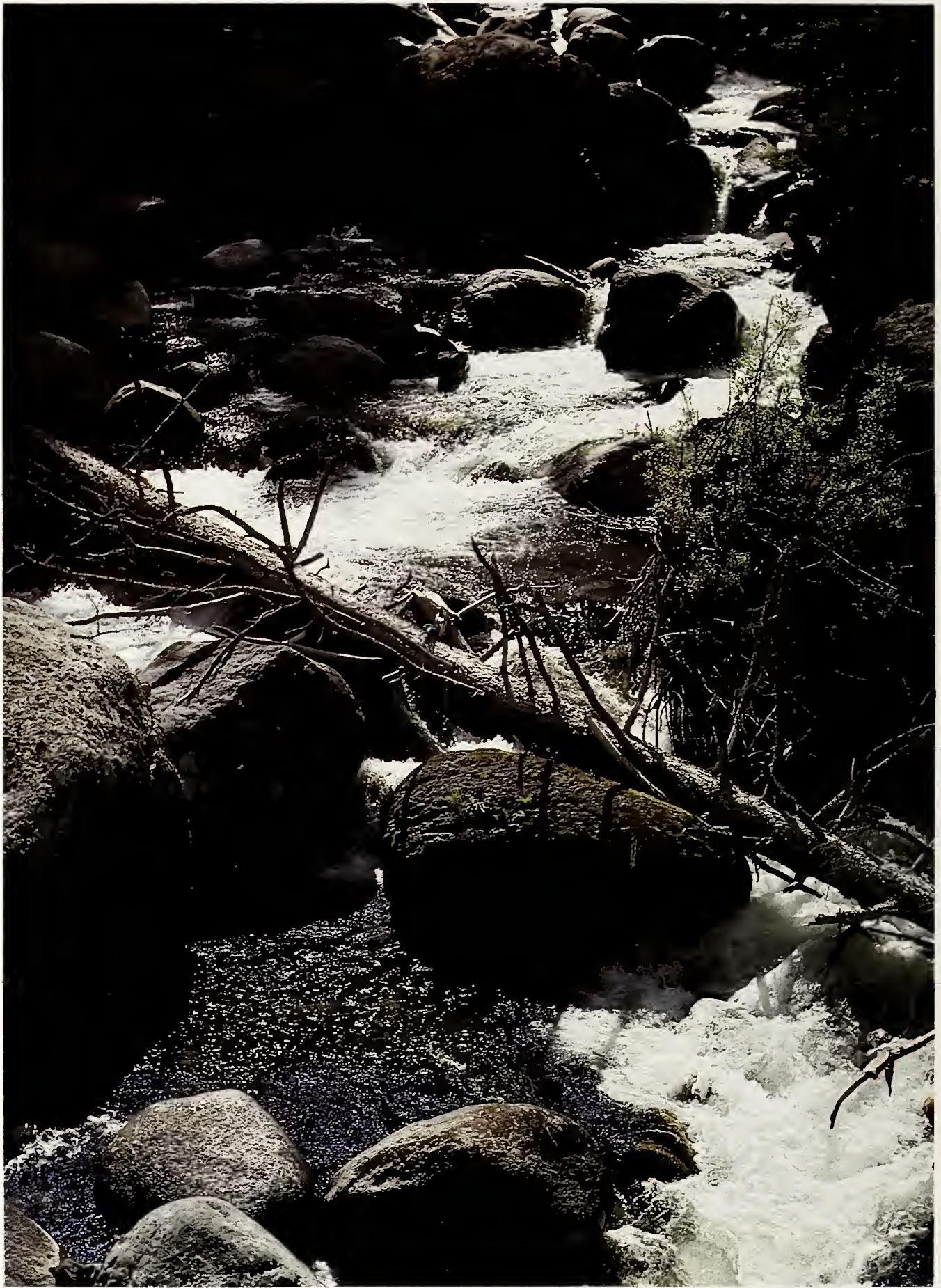
RIBBONS OF WATER BECHLER FALLS

Bechler Falls is a short hike upstream from Cave Falls. Its stature hardly suggests the term “falls.”

In a tree along the river bank I saw the nest of a large bird—hawk, osprey, or eagle?



Bechler Falls - 15 ft.



RIBBONS OF WATER

The Waterfalls and Cascades of Yellowstone National Park

Photographs and Text by John F. Barber

Illustrated by Gene L. Pasini

Published by
Yellowstone Library and Museum Association
in cooperation with
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Editing and Printing coordinated by
Yellowstone University Press
Box 788, Helena, MT 59624

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Library of Congress Cataloging
ISBN Number 0-934948-05-4

Yellowstone Library and Museum Association, Yellowstone National Park

When I first started working on **Ribbons of Water** I thought it would be a summer project. Now, nearly seven years later, it's finished.

When I first started, I had no idea of what I was getting myself into. And several times, while hiking to some waterfall in Yellowstone's back of beyond, with blisters hurting for glory, I wondered why I had gotten involved at all.

I despaired several times of ever seeing the completion of this book. It was always a group of friends who kept my spirits up and kept pushing me toward completion of **Ribbons of Water**. I'd like to thank them.

Several times I went alone into Yellowstone's backcountry to photograph the waterfalls and cascades you've seen here. I'd like to thank my friends who waited and worried.

I'd like to thank those people who hiked with me to some of these waterfalls and cascades. I can't recall a single time that it was easy. I appreciate their company and their perseverance.

I only provided the raw materials for this book. Several other people shaped them into the finished product.

Thanks to Hugh Crandall who wrote the haiku from which **Ribbons of Water** gets its theme.

Thanks to Frederick Verzani for taking care of all matters pertaining to production and publication.

Thanks to Gene Pasini for sharing my vision concerning **Ribbons of Water** and turning it into reality. Thanks also Geno for your artwork.

Thanks to Cindy Christin for typesetting the copy.

And thanks to Pat Verzani who made the cookies and hot chocolate while **Ribbons of Water** evolved around the kitchen table.



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